

[CLICK HERE to print this page](#)



Tobacco tax likely to be passed this year

February 19, 2010



SALT LAKE CITY -- As Utah lawmakers pass the halfway point in the legislative session, it appears they may be open to the idea of a tobacco tax to fill in a few of the gaps in the budget.

Lawmakers are now [concentrating on the 2011 budget](#): Taking a hard look at cuts to everything, including a bite out of [public education](#).

Majority Leader Kevin Garn said the main question about a tobacco tax is, how much of an increase?

"I think we're going to pass a tobacco tax this year. I can't tell you how much, but I think the house is ready to pass some kind of tobacco tax," Garn said.

That's good news for the likely beneficiaries of such a tax: Medicaid recipients.

But a \$1 tax increase on a pack of cigarettes would generate about \$45 million a year -- far below the crying need these advocates say exists.

Lincoln Nehring of the Utah Health Policy Project said, "We're afraid the Legislature is recommending cuts that will undermine some of these programs."

Since the 2010 Legislature is just past the halfway point, the debate will continue throughout the session.

E-mail: rpiatt@ksl.com